




Speech By
Hon. Dr Steven Miles
MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Record of Proceedings, 8 August 2017

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL:
AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (8.19 pm): On 21 July the Agriculture and Environment Committee held a detailed hearing across my portfolio areas of Environment and Heritage Protection, and National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef. My third budget was well scrutinised by the committee. The committee heard me advise that we have increased the operating budget for the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection by \$23.5 million over four years, to \$231.1 million. They heard my detailed explanation of a plan that is focused on bolstering and supporting the work of our environmental regulator. I spoke in detail about our focus on restoring and rebuilding front-line services, including 60 new front-line and front-line support jobs for the regions, after a program of savage cuts inflicted by the former Newman-Nicholls LNP government. I also advised the committee about the budget that was being spent on things Queenslanders care about, like healthy koala populations in the south-east and putting \$40 million into national parks to create a new ecotourism industry. Those priorities all aim to create jobs, protect the environment and protect the Great Barrier Reef.

We had a truly great budget story to tell, which opposition members tried and failed to drown out in a sea of noise. That is no wonder, because their record on environment and heritage protection is woeful. The member for Moggill saw no irony in his first question, which was about staff morale across the environment department. According to the first annual opinion survey of this government, staff confidence soared when we came to office after the cruel, painful cuts his government imposed. Then after only two questions the opposition members ran out of questions about the budget. They chose to fixate on matters that were not relevant to the budget and had nothing to do with the administration of the state.

Then the member for Moggill, a known climate change denier, desperately tried a straw man argument when asking about the government's approach to tackling climate change, ignoring his own head-in-the-sand, denialist approach. I suppose I should be flattered that the LNP thought I had mental nimbleness when it came to explaining our policy settings and targets, but for their benefit let me say: it is actually quite simple. I am happy to go through it again for the benefit of the members for Moggill and Condamine and all those others opposite.

It is clear that coalmining will continue here in Queensland for decades to come. However, the science tells us that by the second half of the century developed countries will need to achieve net zero emissions. That means their energy production will have to be, as far as possible, delivered by renewable energy. That is why we have a 50 per cent renewable energy generation target by 2030. The steps the Palaszczuk government has taken to address climate change impacts have been endorsed recently by none other than former US vice-president Al Gore. Mr Gore was in Melbourne recently to premiere his new movie about climate change. While he was here he said that he was impressed by the way the Palaszczuk government was handling climate change, particularly transition

issues. With the backing of such world leaders as Mr Gore, I make no apologies for saying that Queensland will be a leader in the low-carbon economy, delivering new investments and jobs to our state.

The member for Condamine missed his own hypocrisy in asking about funding for pest and weed management in national parks. I do not recall him—not once—speaking out on behalf of national parks when the opposition leader and the LNP were in government and they were busy slashing ranger jobs and cutting funding. As the 60 rangers who lost their jobs under the LNP can attest, those savage cuts directly affected the ability of staff to manage those parks, including for fire, weeds and pests.

As for the opposition's tabling of a photo they claimed was of my ministerial car, well, that was the most embarrassing moment. Since I have taken delivery of my new ministerial car, a Toyota Camry Hybrid, not only has my fuel usage dropped by two-thirds but also I am now filling up only once a week, which is saving taxpayers money. If members opposite were hoping this topnotch research would result in a mic drop moment, they were sorely disappointed. It would have been quicker and easier to just check the car park or to contact the Ministerial Services Branch. That would have saved them at least some embarrassment.

It is concerning but not surprising that the members for Moggill and Condamine have tried to rewrite history tonight and erase the last three years of their woeful government. I would like to thank the secretariat and all members of the committee for their work.